

In 1955, a bill was introduced in the Legislature to create a state board on alcoholism, but it died in the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means. In the 1957 legislative session, a Senate resolution memorialized the Legislative Counsel Bureau to study alcoholism and related problems in Nevada and to present a report to the 1959 session of the Legislature. This report was issued in December 1958. It recommended creating a division of alcoholism within the Department of Health which would work closely with Alcoholics Anonymous to implement a program based on a similar program in Utah.

In 1960, the Legislature created a State Alcoholism Agency to promote and operate programs for the rehabilitation of alcoholics and to promote the employment of "arrested alcoholics" (those who have found a way to live normally without the use of alcoholic beverages). The Governor was to appoint an "arrested alcoholic who has maintained continued sobriety for 2 years immediately preceding his appointment" as agency Director and also a seven member State Alcoholism Advisory Board. In 1961, the Legislature amended the act creating the Agency to further specify the authority of the Director. Two other amendments loosened the formerly explicit ties of the agency to Alcoholics Anonymous.

In 1971, the State Alcoholism Agency became the Alcoholism Division of the Department of Health, Welfare, and Rehabilitation with added responsibilities in relation to the availability of federal funding to combat alcoholism. The Director of the Department was to appoint the Administrator of the Division who was now to be "experienced in the field of alcoholic rehabilitation."

The Division became the Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Abuse in the Rehabilitation Division of the Department of Human Resources in 1973. The Administrator of the Rehabilitation Division was to appoint the Chief of the Bureau "on the basis of his education, training and experience." Added to the Bureau's responsibilities was developing and applying certification standards for treatment facilities. This act created a thirteen member Alcohol and Drug Abuse Advisory Board, appointed by the Governor; and allowed the Bureau to establish rules to preserve confidentiality of client information. The disclosure of confidential information except for purposes directly connected with program administration was prohibited.

The Bureau's responsibility for certification was extended to facilities, programs and personnel in 1975. A Board of Certification was provisionally established within the Bureau to plan for certifying substance abuse counselors. In 1976, the Legislature created the Advisory Board on Certification of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Personnel. The certification process was developed into a comprehensive model for facility licensure, program accreditation, and personnel certification.

In 1977, the Legislature repealed the provisions for the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Advisory Board which was reconstituted by administrative action as the Governor's Advisory Board on Alcohol and Drug Abuse.

In the later 1970s, the Bureau advocated mandatory coverage for substance abuse treatment in medical insurance policies. In 1979, the Legislature provided for an Advisory Task Force to consider the inclusion of treatment for alcoholism in medical insurance plans and in 1983 this was given a continuing existence as a thirteen-member Advisory Committee on Insurance after the enactment of a requirement for medical insurance to cover substance abuse.

In 1993, the Bureau was required to adopt standards for approving facilities for alcohol and drug abuse evaluation centers to assist the courts. Also in 1993, the Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Abuse and the Rehabilitation Division were transferred to the newly created Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation.